

Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)

October 15, 2024
7 – 8:30 PM

Montgomery County Upper County Community Center
8201 Emory Grove Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20877



Attendees:

Members:

Bobbi Besley
Justin Bollum, non-voting
H Michael Brown
Karen Kodjanian
Rony Ledany
Councilmember Luedtke Aide Aaron Kraut, non-voting
William “Skip” Reindollar
Ruben Rosario, non-voting
Lynne Stein Benzion
Dale Tuttle

MCDOT Staff Liaison:

Joe Pospisil

Guests:

Mollie Hilty
Roger Anderson
Adam Anderson

Action Items

September 17th Meeting Minutes Approval

No modifications were proposed by committee members to the September 17th meeting minutes. Minutes were approved unanimously by the committee and posted on the [ACAC Webpage](#).

Reports and Announcements

Follow Up on Data Subcommittee

The data subcommittee had not received a response on the request submitted to the FAA for noise and safety data related to the Montgomery County Airpark. Subcommittee members would continue to follow up with FAA to obtain any available data.

The subcommittee was also following up with Airport Monitoring Systems, the vendor that provides the Airpark’s flight data, but did not have anything to report at this time. If possible, a date would be selected for a representative from Airport Monitoring Systems to attend an ACAC meeting. However, if finding a convenient date for the vendor to attend an ACAC meeting proved

challenging, the subcommittee members would alternatively seek to meet with the vendor directly and report their findings to the ACAC.

Airpark Noise Complaint Map

A map displaying Airpark noise complaint data for the years 2021-2024 was presented. This map was not a representation of all noise complaints submitted to the airpark within this time period. Instead, the map illustrated complaints submitted from unique addresses aggregated into hexagons approximately ½ mile in width. This provided a spatial example of the Airpark impact on the surrounding community based on the areas from which different residents took the time to file a complaint.

The data yielded 106 unique addresses. Many of the records could not be mapped because the location data associated with the complaint form was too vague. For example, many records were simply “Woodfield” or a likely variation of Woodfield Road (MD 124), which is an 11-mile-long roadway. It was also noted that one record was removed because the hexagon it fell in only had a few residential properties and there could be a risk of identifying the resident.

The committee members familiar with the Airpark runway patterns noted that the hexagons with complaints from the most unique addresses were consistent with the takeoff pattern for runway 3-2 (aircraft taking off in the northwest bound direction). Aircraft produce more noise on takeoff and are at a lower altitude. The residential development beneath the runway 3-2 takeoff pattern is significantly denser compared to the alternative runway, 1-4, and therefore more residents are impacted by noise from aircraft taking off in this direction.

During discussion it was noted that the Airpark is an uncontrolled airport. Factors such as wind impact which runway is used; however, the pilot ultimately decides from which runway to take off. To address this, the committee discussed whether it would be possible to recommend pursuing a controlled airport. It was noted that the Airpark currently did not meet volume requirements to automatically qualify for a tower and competition for federal funding towers is highly competitive. Subcommittee members would gather more information on this matter, including reaching out to other small airports in the region.

Finally, one committee member noted that they reviewed the complaint form and noticed it was not available in Spanish. A Spanish version of the form could help elicit more feedback from members of the Spanish speaking community who do not speak or do not feel as comfortable communicating in English. The Airpark representative on the committee indicated he would investigate this further.

Unfinished Business

Due to the discussion during the Reports and Announcements period running long, the committee did not vote on a meeting date that could be dedicated to collecting feedback from the community. This item would again be included on the agenda for the November ACAC meeting.

New Business

Safety & Community Impact

The committee briefly discussed the need to find available safety related data. Committee members volunteered to follow up with the FAA's Baltimore Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) to obtain reports submitted about the Airpark. Committee members would also look to obtain Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) information that is reported to NASA.

As with the previous meeting, the committee discussed a desire to engage the broader community by finding more outlets to publicize meetings. Beginning with the October meeting information about ACAC meetings would be appearing in the UpCounty Regional Service Center Weekly Newsletter. One committee member indicated that they posted meeting information on Nextdoor. The county liaison confirmed with the Montgomery Village Foundation that they do not publish county meeting information on their calendar or in their newsletter. However, informal ways to reach residents of Montgomery Village with meeting information may exist. The County liaison would also follow up with Abaris Realty, another large property management group in the area, to see if advertising meeting information to their residents is possible.

Community Input/Feedback

Resident Mollie Hilty provided testimony in the form of an email sent to councilmembers following the Labor Day Weekend. In it she indicated that activity from the Airpark impacted her ability to enjoy the holiday weekend. More broadly, the number of flight schools, the hours during which flights operate and the altitude aircraft fly create negative externalities for her and her nearly 600 neighbors in the Hadley Farms Community. She suggested closing the flight schools or having them relocate to Frederick County.

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm